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Activities of the Department of Public Information (Part two)

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/111, section I of the present report outlines some of the steps taken by the Department of Public Information over the last six months to further rationalize the network of United Nations information centres, especially in developing countries, through partnerships, better use of information and communications technologies, and capacity-building. As a result of those efforts, United Nations information centres are better able to promote the work of the United Nations to the global audience.

Section II contains a review of progress made towards meeting the challenges presented in the quest for language parity on the United Nations website, provides additional information on the new requirements of ensuring accessibility to the website by persons with disabilities, and highlights progress towards more efficiently managing the content on the website.

The report also includes an annex, which presents the magnitude of costs related to the introduction of Department of Public Information press releases in languages other than English and French.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/111 B, the General Assembly noted the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department of Public Information submitted for consideration by the Committee on Information at its twenty-ninth session (A/AC.198/2007/4 and Corr.1) and requested the Secretary-General to continue reporting to the Committee on the activities of the Department.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly called on the Department to provide specific information on a number of its activities. The Bureau of the Committee on Information, which met in September 2007, advised the Department to cluster the requested information around thematic areas and to present that information in two parts. The present report — part two of the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department of Public Information — addresses two specific areas: the activities of the network of United Nations information centres and the United Nations website and its progress towards parity among official languages. Unless otherwise indicated, parts one and two combined cover the Department's activities for the period July 2007 to February 2008.

3. Also in resolution 62/111 B, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Committee on Information at its thirtieth session proposals, along with their financial implications, to improve the scope of press releases in addition to the existing languages in order to widen the United Nations message, assuring their comprehensiveness and up-to-date nature, bearing in mind budgetary constraints. Such proposals are included in the annex to this report.

Section I

The network of United Nations information centres: delivering better results

I. Background

4. The network of United Nations information centres includes 63 information centres, services, and information components around the world. They serve as field offices of the Department of Public Information, providing a public information presence for the Organization in countries around the world. The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/111 B, emphasized the importance of this network in enhancing the public image of the United Nations and in disseminating messages on the United Nations to local populations, especially in developing countries. Guided by the decisions of the Committee on Information and building on progress made in the past years towards rationalizing the work of United Nations information centres, the Department has further strengthened their work by expanding partnerships with United Nations system organizations, Governments, civil society and the private sector, making better use of new information and communications technologies, bolstering its information presence in key locations by reallocating resources, and strengthening professional staffing. The overall objective has been to provide a structure and support base that makes possible better and more efficient service to a larger audience.

II. Expanding outreach, building new partnerships

A. United Nations information centres and United Nations country teams

5. Guided by the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) and the recommendations of the High-level Panel of the Secretary-General on United Nations System-wide Coherence of November 2006 (see A/61/583), United Nations information centres have been working to support United Nations country teams through the United Nations Communications Group (UNCG). This Group, now established in over 80 countries, including most countries where information centres are located, serves as a common communications platform for the United Nations system. In most cases, serving as secretariat, the centres play a key role in this forum.[1] The creation of UNCG has contributed to higher visibility for the work of the country teams and has increased coherence in communications work at the country level.

B. Reaching out to local media

6. United Nations information centres play a vital role in telling the United Nations story through the local media. Several centres have established ongoing arrangements with local media for a regular column or page devoted to United Nations issues. Partnership with the broadcast media is also the focus of many information centres.

- **UNIC Asunción** has arranged for publication of United Nations materials in major publications, such as *ABC Color*, *Última Hora* and *La Nación*, in their education-related supplement pages.
- **UNIC Beirut** has an agreement with two Lebanese daily newspapers to provide information materials selected by the centre for a "UN Supplement Page" in *Al-Balad* which appears in its Sunday edition, and for a biweekly magazine half-page "Window on the UN" in *Al-Mustaqbal*.
- **UNIC Cairo**, along with the rest of the United Nations country team in Egypt, sponsors a quarterly supplement of the *Al-Ahram* weekly called "Beyond".
- **UNIC Khartoum** negotiated the publication of extracts from the *Least Developed Countries Report 2007*, issued by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in *Sudan Vision*, an independent newspaper.
- **UNIC Dar es Salaam** produces radio programmes in Swahili and provides them to local radio stations.
- **UNIC Moscow** has arrangements with *Diplomat*, a Russian-language journal, for publishing at least five dedicated articles/interviews by senior United Nations officials or experts annually.

[1] For more information on UNCG at the country level, see part one of the report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/2008/2).

- **UNIC Rio de Janeiro** has established a cooperative agreement with Empresa Brasileira de Comunicação (EBC), a public broadcasting company, to broadcast United Nations-produced radio and television programmes.

Box 1

Overall, the number of newspapers/magazine articles and television/radio broadcasts generated through the efforts of United Nations information centres in 2007 totalled 22,311, a 5.3 per cent increase over the previous year.

7. Information centres are increasingly becoming involved in supporting media development. In 2007, 54 training workshops for local journalists were organized by United Nations information centres in collaboration with various partners.

- **UNIC Jakarta**, along with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, organized a two-day media and stakeholders' workshop in October 2007 on the scientific and political aspects of climate change to give journalists a better understanding of the United Nations Climate Change Conference held from 3 to 14 December in Bali. That timely workshop contributed to the quality and quantity of the coverage of the Bali Conference by the media in Indonesia.

C. Working with civil society

8. Increasingly, United Nations information centres partner with civil society, including educational institutions, to widen the reach of information about the United Nations to audiences around the world. The creative energy of civil society organizations has enabled the centres to connect with new audiences and to diversify its promotional campaigns on key United Nations issues. This ever-growing partnership is best exemplified by the success of the 2007 Stand Up against Poverty and for Millennium Development Goals Campaign. Over 30 information centres worked with their civil society partners to boost participation to a total of over 43 million people worldwide.

- In **Japan**, UNIC Tokyo partnered with the Japan Soccer Association and organized a stand-up moment at the Egypt versus Japan game.
- In **Australia**, partnering with the Make Poverty History Campaign, UNIC Canberra organized a public event on the lawns of the Australian Parliament in which members of the Australian Federal Parliament participated.
- In **Kenya**, UNIC Nairobi was joined by 130 schools in the towns of Eldoret, Bungoma, Nakuru and Molo for a special event.
- In **Bangladesh**, with civil society partners, UNIC Dhaka organized a virtual "Stand Up" Campaign through SMS (text messaging).

D. Making wider use of the United Nations information centre library as a resource

9. For many information centres, especially those in developing countries, the centre's library serves as a valuable resource for information on the United Nations. The number of visitors to United Nations information centre libraries is on the rise, growing from 244,420 in the biennium 2004-2005 to 288,862 in 2006-2007, an increase of 18 per cent. While the trend towards dissemination of information materials in electronic format is undeniable, for many information centres operating in developing countries hard copy materials remain an essential element of effective outreach. In 2007, the Department distributed 246,539 hard copy materials to United Nations information centres, 76 per cent of them to centres in developing countries. Some centres, in cooperation with libraries in academic, government and cultural institutions, have also organized training sessions for local librarians.

- **UNIC Prague** made a presentation at a Librarian Training Workshop, organized by a local non-governmental organization, on United Nations information resources for a group of 22 information professionals.
- **UNIC Nairobi** assisted in training eight librarians from Liberia, who were part of a capacity-building programme covering Internet searching, information technology in the library, and the use of online reference sources.

10. In 2007, the five most visited libraries in the network of United Nations information centres were: Ouagadougou (36,162), Lusaka (17,561), Harare (16,772), Bujumbura (13,099) and Windhoek (6,891).

E. Multilingualism in the work of UNICs

11. UNICs are able to reach wider segments of the public in the countries where they are located through producing information material in local languages. These include the Department's publications as well as those of the United Nations system and information centres' own locally produced information materials. Among frequently translated publications are: *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*, *UN in Brief*, *International Bill of Human Rights*, *60 Ways the UN Makes a Difference* and the *Millennium Development Goals*.

Box 2

Wealth of languages

United Nations information centres translate and produce United Nations materials in the following 36 local languages: Armenian, Azeri, Bangla, Czech, Bahasa Indonesia, Cebuano, Dutch, Ewe, Farsi, Georgian, German, Greek, Guaraní, Hindi, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Joola, Kabye, Lingala, Mandika, Moore, Myanmar, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Pulaar, Sereer, Sinhala, Slovenian, Soninke, Swedish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek and Wolof.

12. Currently, 28 information centres produce their own newsletters/bulletins, either on a weekly, monthly or quarterly basis. These are produced in 12 local languages, namely: Armenian, Bahasa Indonesia, Bangla, Czech, Georgian, Hindi, Japanese, Portuguese, Romanian, Ukrainian, Urdu and Uzbek. United Nations information centres also maintain websites in 29 local languages, in addition to five official languages.

13. In October 2007, UNIC La Paz organized the first ever Model UN in the Aymara language in cooperation with the University of Aquino. The key issues discussed during that historic Model UN were related to democratization, rural development, migration, food security and gender equality. The inaugural ceremony was attended by indigenous, municipal and education authorities in the region. That Model UN was fully conducted in Aymara, a language spoken by nearly 25 per cent of the Bolivian population. It is the first time in the history of the network of United Nations information centres that a Model UN was held in the language of indigenous peoples.

III. Working together at the regional level

14. The strengthening of the information centres in Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria has led to greater interaction among the centres in their regions on a range of matters. They include collective approaches to specific communications challenges, the sharing of tasks such as translation among centres, joint activities to highlight different issues, and assistance in addressing the operational needs and concerns of information centres in neighbouring countries. They also lead efforts to bring together regional communications groups to discuss common United Nations communications concerns and opportunities, and to develop joint projects on key issues.

- **UNIC Cairo** organized the second meeting of the United Nations Communications Group for the Arab Region in Cairo at the end of October 2007. Attended by over 60 participants, representing 27 United Nations entities, the meeting discussed practical measures to improve the image of the United Nations in the Arab world, to promote regional coordination of communications activities, and to increase awareness of the Millennium Development Goals in the region.

- **UNIC Mexico City** chairs the United Nations Regional Communications Group for Latin America and the Caribbean, established in July 2006. It has become a key partner in regional communications projects such as the Inter-Agency Communication Framework for Avian and Pandemic Influenza in the Americas.

- **UNIC Pretoria** supports the 17 United Nations information centres in sub-Saharan Africa through the sharing of information on everything from substantive issues and United Nations country team retreats to best practices and administrative concerns. With the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, UNIC Pretoria is working with other United Nations entities to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the event and galvanize attention for United Nations issues in sub-Saharan Africa.

- **UNIS Geneva, UNIS Vienna and the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC) Brussels** have collaborated in various ways, taking advantage of their respective strengths, information networks, and locations. They have developed together, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, an attractive and comprehensive website for the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, called "Know Your Rights" (http://www.knowyourrights2008.org), which was launched on Human Rights Day 2007 in three languages (English, French and Italian).

15. In May 2007, the Department held a workshop in São Paulo, Brazil, for the communications officers of all of the information centres in the Americas. It focused on the increasingly prominent role that information centres play in communications at the country level and on strategic and innovative partnerships that centres can develop with civil society and the private sector. In January 2008, a similar regional workshop, funded by the Government of Japan, was held in Bangkok for the directors and information officers from information centres in Asia and the Pacific. The overall objective of the workshop was to support development in the region through improving understanding of the issues and the Organization's work in this area, and through increased collaboration on communications efforts among centres in Asia and the Pacific.

IV. Capacity-building

16. In order to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations information centres and to maximize their contribution to the overall communications objectives of the Organization, the Department has devoted more attention to strengthening the capacity of those offices through a combination of staff training, improvements in information and communications technology infrastructure and connectivity, and upgraded equipment.

A. Staff development and training

17. Following the redeployment of posts throughout the network in recent years, the Department has sought to ensure that staff are given the opportunities for professional development through training. In 2007, working with the Department of Management, the United Nations Development Programme and other offices, the Department of Public Information was able to organize 13 different training sessions for 66 of its field staff, representing approximately one quarter of its total field staff. Such training, for newly recruited staff, ranged from orientation to communications and library workshops, to procurement training. Two such library workshops were organized by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library:

- In **Santo Domingo**, a workshop for libraries in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in January 2007 with extrabudgetary support from the Government of the Dominican Republic.
- In **Bangkok**, a workshop for Asia and the Pacific for reference staff from 11 information centres throughout the region was held in November 2007 at

the offices of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

18. Later this year the Department is planning to offer group training opportunities to some of the administrative support staff from its field offices, as well as to staff dealing with information and communications technology from certain centres. These staff would then be expected to serve as "trainers" for colleagues performing similar functions at information centres in neighbouring countries. In this way, limited budgetary resources for training can be maximized.

Box 3

Partnering with youth

UNIC Lagos in December 2006 joined three leading youth non-governmental organizations in Nigeria: the Youth Action Rangers of Nigeria (YARN), the Chris Ogunbanjo Foundation and the Professional Leaders' Forum, in launching the project "United Nations Information Technology Service (UNITeS) — Nigeria", a four-week training course on computer applications and the Internet. The programme benefits from financial support from Ericsson International and the CISCO Academy. Its success has generated interest on the part of Zenith Bank Plc, one of the leading commercial banks in Nigeria, to open a One-Stop IT Solution Centre in Lagos in 2008, where trainees and others can conduct research on information technology and development issues.

B. Expanding Internet services

19. In 2007, the Department created 26 new and revamped websites for information centres in developing countries, including 16 in sub-Saharan Africa. The websites were designed as a collaborative project by the information technology teams from the Department at United Nations Headquarters in New York and from UNRIC Brussels, working with the staff at the centres concerned. As a result, as of the end of the biennium 2006-2007, all 63 information centres have functioning websites where information is available in five official languages. The establishment of webmaster positions, all of which have now been filled, at key offices in the network — Brussels, Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria — will further strengthen the Department's virtual team of information technology specialists.

20. The Department is also pursuing other improvements in the information and communications technology infrastructure of United Nations information centres. Among them is a dedicated e-mail hosting solution that would result in coherent, easily identifiable e-mail addresses for the network, thereby alleviating the myriad problems associated with using multiple and varied e-mail systems and commercial service providers. In December 2007, the United Nations Information Centre in Lagos became the first to start using the new e-mail system, which will be expanded in 2008 with the establishment of UNIC.ORG e-mail accounts for all information centre staff worldwide.

- Between 2006 and 2007 there has been an increase of 11 per cent in the overall number of visitors to the websites maintained by United Nations information centres. During the same period, the average monthly page views for all information centres' websites grew from 34,705,581 in 2006 to 42,024,979 in 2007, a growth of 21 per cent.

C. Providing centres with new equipment

21. In 2007, the Department of Public Information provided new communications equipment to 31 information centres in developing countries. By arranging for the acquisition centrally, through the Procurement Service, the Department was able to benefit from economies of scale, reducing the average cost of desktop computers and digital cameras which are essential for information centres to perform their work effectively. The Department also purchased videoconference equipment for the centres in Brussels, Buenos Aires and Mexico City. Resources permitting, the Department plans to expand this initiative to other information centres around the world.

22. With the growing global trend towards web-based delivery of information, it is essential that information centres have up-to-date information on international developments and global issues as well as the equipment needed to access that information. The level of funding provided to the Department for the network of United Nations information centres for 2008, however, is below what is realistically needed and calls into serious question the ability of the Department to replace and upgrade communications equipment for its field offices in the current biennium.

V. Consultations with Member States

23. The Department, guided by the Committee on Information, has proceeded to further rationalize United Nations information centres in close consultation with Member States, especially those which host information centres. For centres where the cost of rent and maintenance continues to consume a significant share of their respective operational funds, the Department will renew its approach to the host Governments concerned with a view to securing extrabudgetary contributions and support, as appropriate, to supplement the regular programme budget and to increase the availability of resources for outreach activities to key local audiences.

24. The Department has taken note of the General Assembly's recommendation, in resolution 62/111 B, section II, regarding the special needs of Portuguese-speaking countries and of the offer made by the Government of Angola to host a centre for lusophone countries in Africa. While the Department recognizes those needs, even with the provision of rent- and maintenance-free premises, as generously offered by the Government of Angola, the Department would be unable to cover the ongoing operational costs and additional staffing that would be required from within existing resources. At the same time, it should be noted that the Portuguese Desk at the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels provides information materials on a daily basis to all United Nations offices operating in Portuguese-speaking countries. In addition, although the Department would welcome the opportunity to expand the information services it provides to countries not currently serviced by an information centre, it simply lacks the resources to do so.

VI. Conclusions

25. The Department of Public Information continues its efforts to rationalize how United Nations information centres work, with the aim of achieving better results. This is being achieved through expanded partnerships at the local and regional levels, a wider use of new information and communications technologies, and capacity-building through staff development and training. The Department recognizes the importance of United Nations information centres as key members of United Nations country teams and their support to the United Nations Resident Coordinator, within the context of system-wide coherence, and continues to focus on this essential aspect of their work. The Department continues to foster closer and more strategic collaboration with United Nations information centres, including through its strategic communications planning process described in part one of this report (A/AC.198/2008/2).

Section II

The United Nations website: progress towards parity among official languages, accessibility and content management

I. Background

26. The complex challenge of addressing the issue of parity among official languages on the United Nations website has been one to which the Department has been applying its best efforts for the past seven years. This challenge is also faced by all other content-providing offices. The practicality and the scale of resources needed to meet the request of the General Assembly have been submitted in earlier reports to the Committee on Information and to the Fifth Committee. The Secretary-General has addressed this issue in eight previous reports, including one submitted in 2007 for consideration by the Committee on Information at its twenty-ninth session (A/AC.198/2007/3).

II. Website visits

27. The United Nations website has continued to be the main source of information about the activities of the Organization. Visitors from more than 212 countries and territories access the United Nations website, viewing more than 1.3 million pages daily. In order to quantify usage of the website, the Department is using "visits" as a second measure of usage in addition to "page views". An explanation of the various terms — visits, page views, accesses — was provided in section III, paragraph 5 (a), (b) and (c), of the 2007 report.

28. The website is used by different audiences in different ways. Users access news and other web pages, download audio and photos, and view videos. As such, analysing usage data is a complex process and industry standards in this regard have been evolving. There have also been problems with site availability owing to server downtime and capacity issues, as well as the incident in August 2007 when part of the United Nations website was compromised by a hacker who was able to gain access to the site and substitute elements of the website. These are being addressed

in the context of the roll-out of a content management system and the strengthening of website governance.

29. Table 1 below shows the number of visits, pages viewed and accesses to the United Nations website for the five-year period 2003 to 2007.

Table 1
Visits, page views and accesses to the United Nations website, 2003-2007*

United Nations website	*Visits*	*Page views*	*Accesses*
Yearly totals			
2003		268 027 080	2 165 122 997
2004		337 544 975	2 331 566 302
2005	35 322 875	396 566 178	2 766 987 638
2006	49 389 245	413 891 020	—
2007	54 347 341	477 555 957	
Daily averages			
2003		734 321	5 931 844
2004		922 254	6 370 400
2005	96 775	1 085 762	7 575 761
2006	135 313	1 133 948	—
2007	148 896	1 308 372	

* Because of server problems, statistics for a number of days were not available. To get the most accurate estimate for those days, data has been extrapolated by averaging the data from the days before and the days after these outages.

30. The overall rising trend held for the website as a whole in 2007 for both page views, which showed a 2.9 per cent increase, and unique visits, which showed an impressive 10.2 per cent increase over the previous year. Practices such as page caching mean the above numbers may be underestimated. Increases of usage among the languages have been varied. The non-English sites show the strongest growth, with an average increase in page views of 28.6 per cent in 2007. The Russian site shows the largest increase in page views, while the Chinese site shows the largest increase in unique visits. The number of page views actually declined by 3.7 per cent for the English site but the unique visits increased 3.9 per cent, indicating, as before, that more visitors are coming to the site but are viewing fewer pages on each visit. An analysis of the entry and exit pages indicates that many users are visiting pages directly instead of navigating to these pages from the home page. They are either bookmarking their favourite pages or arriving there through search engine links. The trend, however, is not the same for all the languages. In the case of Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish, the increase in unique visits is less than the increase in page views, while for Chinese and English the reverse is true.

Table 2
Increase in the number of page views and visits to the United Nations website across languages, 2005-2007

	Arabic	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*	*www.un.org*
Page views							
2005	10 178 618	18 433 275	318 133 891	18 267 863	11 873 869	19 678 662	396 566 178
2006	12 346 648	24 203 023	365 400 934	21 065 351	16 335 047	24 540 017	463 891 020
2007	14 200 141	29 682 917	359 577 065	29 177 415	25 833 875	26 736 220	477 838 460
2007 versus 2006 (percentage)	+15.1	+22.6	-1.5	+38.5	+58.1	+8.9	+3.0
Visits							
2005	1 542 110	2 411 103	21 359 071	3 766 316	1 566 179	4 678 096	35 322 875
2006	2 445 858	4 085 582	28 737 205	4 596 119	2 919 180	6 605 301	49 389 245
2007	2 592 544	5 589 997	30 994 223	5 592 887	3 798 964	6 898 148	54 425 657
2007 versus 2006 (percentage)	+6.1	+ 36.8	+7.8	+21.7	+30.1	+4.4	+10.2

III. Adding new pages to the website

31. There has been notable progress in adding more new pages to the website. However, given the fact that far more pages are available in English and offices are continuingly adding pages in that language, the number of new pages in English is still higher than the number of pages added in the other languages. This unfortunately means that progress towards parity among languages remains a difficult challenge. In some areas, progress has been steady and key information areas on the website such as news — one of the most visited areas of the site — have made significant strides in enhancing the multilingual nature of the site.

32. Owing to the decentralized nature of the United Nations website, with more than 143 user offices directly posting material onto the site, not all pages are handled or managed by the Department. While the Department, through its Web Services Section, handles the bulk of the languages other than English and French, there is at present no count of the pages added individually by other offices because it is a labour-intensive process that will need to be implemented at the level of each content-providing office. The responsibility for producing their websites in the official languages lies with the individual author departments, as has been recognized by Member States. The Department of Public Information has sought to promote multilingualism actively on the United Nations website across the Secretariat bilaterally with author offices.

33. The Department has engaged in active liaison with, and provides advice and project management services to, author offices for new language sites, such as for the Peacebuilding Commission, the Office of the Secretary-General's Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Economic and Social Council secretariat, among others. However, the Department's capacity to manage a large amount of these activities is limited to the extent that it not jeopardize the work on areas of the

site for which the Department is directly responsible. Furthermore, space and equipment constraints restrict the pace at which this effort can be carried out.

34. Table 3 below shows the number of new pages created and pages updated in 2007 by the Web Services Section of the Department of Public Information.

Table 3
New pages created and pages updated in 2007 by the Web Services Section of the Department of Public Information

	Arabic	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish**
New pages	2 085	2 568	2 024	2 126	2 101	2 083
Updated pages	4 525	5 680	5 121	4 642	5 414	10 730

* The number of updated pages for the Spanish site is very high because the Spanish Language Unit had the services of a number of volunteers and interns during the course of the year.

IV. Partnership with academic institutions

35. The agreements with universities for pro bono translations have resulted in a total of 2,552 new pages added to the website in Chinese, Russian and Spanish. The Zhejiang University in China provided 400 pages of translations in Chinese, and the Minsk State Linguistic University in Belarus translated 259 pages into Russian. But by far the most translations were received from the University of Salamanca in Spain, which assigned two teams of faculty and students who were able to deliver 1,893 pages of translations into Spanish. The topics of the translations included human rights, humanitarian affairs, ageing, energy, children, education, Cyberschoolbus and peacekeeping operations, among others. The quality of translation was fair at the beginning but improved after several revisions when students became more familiar with the United Nations and its terminology. Revisions by the Department of Public Information are still necessary and very crucial in ensuring accuracy. In addition, these translations require formatting and proofreading.

36. The Department has been continuing its efforts to enlist the support of an institution of higher learning for pro bono translation into Arabic. In this regard, support from Member States in establishing a relationship will go a long way in addressing this issue. An external translation agreement for French has not been pursued as there is more available content in French on the United Nations website, including most of the material produced by the Department, owing to the fact that many Secretariat offices/departments create and maintain content in French.

Table 4
Number of translated pages received and processed in 2007 under pro bono agreements with universities

	Chinese	*Russian*	*Spanish*
New pages	400	259	1 893

V. Reaching the goal of parity

37. In 2006, the General Assembly made four new Professional posts available to the Web Services Section to establish the separate Language Units. At the same time, however, the Assembly, in paragraph 66 of its resolution 61/121 B, introduced a set of new requirements, such as making all new and updated pages accessible for persons with disabilities. This has meant that the originally intended impact of the new posts has not been fully realized or because of the additional effort needed to meet the new requirement. The new posts have been filled and some of the resulting vacancies are in the process of being filled.

38. Daily updates and revision is a requirement for the website to remain relevant and useful. This in turn raises the complexity of the challenge of achieving parity. Table 3 shows the extent of the tasks borne by the Web Services Section. The commitment of resources to updating in all official languages is therefore essential, but comes at the cost of slowing the pace at which new material can be processed. It is important to note that each new page, of course, requires greater input of staff time than updating.

39. Access to official documents in all official languages has been available from the United Nations website since 2004, but it is only one aspect of moving towards the goal of parity. Other efforts to increase parity are centred on the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Knowledge Sharing Centre (DHLink), which ensures that official documents are fully indexed and made accessible through the Official Document System (ODS) as well as in the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBISnet). Documents are searchable on ODS by subject in all six official languages through the application of the UNBIS Thesaurus. The United Nations website provides links to both of these resources.

40. The DHLink continues to develop its web products with the aim of providing equitable access to United Nations information and knowledge in the six official languages. In collaboration with the library at the United Nations Office at Geneva, DHLink continues its retrospective digitization programme with a focus on Security Council documentation. Documents in all six official languages are scanned, processed for full text retrieval, and posted to ODS.

41. The Department also enhances the multilingual nature of the United Nations website through its continued work towards enhancing the multimedia elements of the site to an expanding global audience. Radio programmes in all the official languages, as well as a number of non-official languages, including Kiswahili and Portuguese, continue to enhance the multilingualism of the site and are available both in AM Radio quality for the listening public, and in high audio quality for broadcasters to download.

42. Webcasting, now available in the language delivered in addition to English, has become an important tool, again offering a daily enhancement of the multilingualism of the site. Websites created by the network of United Nations information centres are providing information in 28 non-official languages. The rationale behind the drive to enhance multilingualism on the website is ensuring wider access to information on the United Nations to all the peoples of the world, and technical improvements to the site are a key means to that end, along with progress in such areas as improving access for persons with disabilities.

VI. Accessibility and the United Nations website

43. The Department of Public Information is aggressively pursuing accessibility to the United Nations website by persons with disabilities, including visual and hearing disabilities, with a view to making information about the United Nations and its activities available to the widest possible audience. All new web projects are designed to meet accessibility requirements, complying with the World Wide Web Consortium standards, which at the present time are the only standards with worldwide recognition and acceptance. The additional effort required to create the new pages and to validate them against the standards has required additional production time, which has increased by at least 20 per cent. The creation of the website of the Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provided an opportunity to further develop accessibility testing. The site was tested by an expert of the Royal National Institute of Blind People (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), as well as by a panel of screen-reader users.

44. As resources permit, older pages are corrected to address accessibility issues. The diagnosis and correction of accessibility barriers in existing pages is a process that is more time consuming than the creation of new accessible pages. Therefore, the Department has been pursuing its efforts to raise awareness on this issue, so that the accessibility factor is taken into account at the start of a project.

45. In adopting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 13 December 2006 (resolution 61/106), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to implement progressively standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services of the United Nations system. To assist departments and offices across the Secretariat in producing accessible web content, a task force has been established to draft standards and procedures on the creation and maintenance of accessible websites. These standards will be promulgated through the Standards Working Group of the Information and Technology Board.

VII. Content management system and website governance

46. The need for a robust and secure content management system and its benefits have been highlighted in detail in section VI of the 2007 report (A/AC.198/2007/3). A workable governance mechanism goes hand in hand with a customized content management system. The Department has been continuing to work closely with the Information Technology Services Division of the Department of Management on the acquisition of a web content management system. Over the course of the last year, the Department of Public Information participated in an evaluation exercise and the validation of a proof of concept for a web content management system as part of an overall Enterprise Content Management System.

47. Website governance can be significantly improved once a content management system is in place whereby a centralized template ensures organizational branding and lays down specific presentational requirements. In a content management system, since the content is separate from the presentation, the same content can be presented in different formats to match different contexts. The content management system would not only facilitate institutional branding and ensure easier content management, but would also aid content creation and publishing in all official languages, help to improve access to all web facilities for persons with disabilities,

improve content integrity by eliminating multiple copies and enabling strict version control, facilitate and enforce strong policies on content retention, meet or exceed all applicable standards for security and privacy, introduce a formal content publishing workflow, standards, review and approval process to reduce errors and maintain quality and integrity of content, establish pre-built templates for the most commonly requested content types, increase productivity for content creators and technical support staff, and, finally, make possible delivery of rich multimedia content and its management.

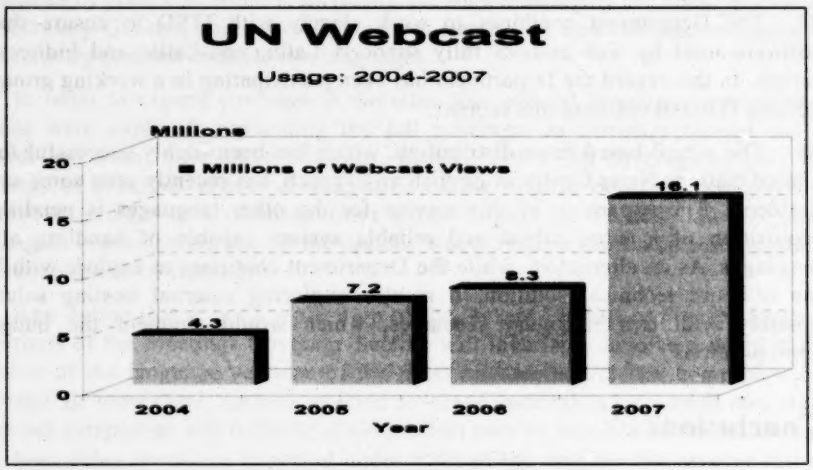
48. A coherent governance mechanism can be gradually put into place as more and more content is moved into the new system. It continues to be a challenge to put into place an overall governance scheme for coherent management and governance of the public website which allows author offices the flexibility and creativity to meet the needs of their particular audiences — be they government officials, the media, academia, civil society or the public at large — but which also ensures a unified technical infrastructure, consistency in presentation, organizational branding, as well as meeting the dual mandate of producing material in all official languages and addressing accessibility needs. To this end, the Department is working closely with the Chief Information Technology Officer and the Information Technology Services Division (ITSD) to link the implementation of a content management system with the gradual adoption of a more robust governance system. The Department will work closely with other user offices and departments to develop such a permanent system over the course of 2008.

49. The selection of an enterprise content management software has been completed and a contract has been signed with a vendor for licences, training and limited professional services. The financial implications of introducing the system for the United Nations website have been outlined by the Department of Management in a report of the Secretary-General (A/62/510). The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has reviewed and endorsed the funding proposal, which is now awaiting review by the Fifth Committee. Only when funding is approved can the Organization move to the implementation of the new system. In the meantime, ITSD and the Department of Public Information have identified an open-source content management system that could be a short-term solution, oriented towards addressing change management and urgent issues. On the basis of a joint plan for this short-term solution, 10 staff from four departments have been trained and the preliminary requirements for this system have been implemented. The scope and pace of implementation of the move to this short-term solution are governed by the availability of resources in both the Department of Public Information and ITSD.

VIII. Webcasting

50. The United Nations Webcast (UN Webcast), established in 2001 in the Department of Public Information, has proven to be a cost-effective communications tool with global outreach. It broadcasts daily, live and on demand over the Internet, United Nations meetings, such as those of the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and press briefings, conferences and events from United Nations Headquarters, as well as major United Nations conferences held at other locations. It provides to a global audience access in real time to, and a visual record of, United Nations

deliberations, as well as the position of individual Member States on various issues, thereby increasing awareness and a better understanding of the work of the Organization. It also promotes the Organization's core values of transparency and objectivity. In 2007, UN Webcast provided live and on-demand coverage of more than 2,200 events. During the same year, over 16.1 million webcast videos, live and archived, were viewed by users from over 198 countries and territories.



51. The dramatic increase in the worldwide audience of UN Webcast is an indication of the effectiveness of video on the web, and the Department is seeking ways to strengthen its webcasting capacity to further increase production and distribution of webcast video as well as to meet the high demand for this service both at Headquarters and at other duty stations, such as Geneva. During 2007, the UN Webcast team provided live and on-demand webcast coverage of all four sessions of the Human Rights Council that took place in Geneva. The cost for the 2007 webcast coverage of the Council was paid through voluntary contributions by Member States. On 8 December 2006, the Human Rights Council adopted decision 3/104,[2] requesting webcast coverage of all its future sessions on a regular basis. The Department will have to rely on the continuation of voluntary contributions by Member States to ensure that complete and uninterrupted webcast coverage of all sessions of the Council is provided. In the absence of these contributions, the coverage will need to be scaled back both for the Human Rights Council and at Headquarters should there be no replacement of staff sent to cover the Council.

52. In addition to sessions of the Human Rights Council, the UN Webcast provided live and on-demand webcast coverage of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007. Furthermore, in order to meet the demands for multilingualism, the Department is exploring ways to expand its webcast services in the six official languages, to the extent possible.

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 53* (A/62/53), chap. II.B.

IX. Other issues

53. The Department continues to supplement staffing resources in the drive to enhance the website. In this regard, the Department expresses its gratitude to the Government of France for providing an associate expert to work on the French site. The Department continues to utilize aggressively the services of interns and skilled volunteers to complement the work performed by its staff.

54. The Department continues to work closely with ITSD to ensure that all software used by web authors fully supports Latin, non-Latin, and bidirectional scripts. In this regard the Department has been participating in a working group that advises ITSD in ensuring this support.

55. The e-mail-based news distribution, which has been highly successful for the United Nations News Centre in English and French, has recently seen some serious problems. The expansion of this service for the other languages is pending the acquisition of a more robust and reliable system capable of handling all the languages. As an alternative, while the Department continues to explore with ITSD the in-house technical solution, it is also exploring external hosting solutions, possibly with extrabudgetary resources, which would augment the budgetary appropriations.

X. Conclusions

56. The Department has continued its efforts to move towards parity among the official languages on the website, ensuring accessibility for the disabled and better managing the contents of the United Nations website. While the Department has been able to increase the volume of new material added to the site and handle the increased maintenance and updating workload, the capacity has been tempered by new requirements of ensuring access by persons with disabilities, and the heightened security requirements to make the site resistant to hackers. The Department has therefore focused its efforts on key areas that are visited more often, not only with new pages with textual information, but including webcasting, audio, video and photographic materials, all enhancing the multilingual and accessible nature of the United Nations website.

57. Balancing the need to ensure access together with a high level of security and efficiently managing the content, the Department is seeking to continually expand its outreach to a wider range of audiences in all regions of the world.

Annex

Press releases in additional official languages

1. The Department's Meetings Coverage Section currently provides full and comprehensive coverage of intergovernmental meetings and conferences in English and French, the two working languages of the Organization. It also provides summaries of press conferences, including the noon briefing by the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General, and issues full texts of statements, speeches and messages of the Secretary-General in those two languages.

2. In order to expand coverage to the other four official languages, a number of options were explored: replicating the full coverage, as currently carried out in English and French; selective coverage, namely, either full coverage of only the meetings of principal organs or adaptation of the English or French coverage of selected meetings; or translating from either English or French into the other languages. Implementing any of the options would require additional resources and different patterns of staffing.

3. Any option that is not a replication of the present English or French language operations of the Meetings Coverage Section will invariably involve a delay in the issuance of the language versions of the press releases and/or less comprehensive coverage. In some cases, such as selected coverage undertaken by a small core staff, same-day completion and delivery of the product may be possible. However, at least a 24-hour delay would be expected under most of the options that involve full or partial translation, or adaptation.

Options for making United Nations press releases available in each additional official language

Option I: Replication of full coverage

4. This requires multiplying the present meetings coverage operation, which functions in English and French, by the number of additional languages in which the output will also be produced. This would include statement-by-statement coverage of all open intergovernmental meetings and the final press release issued within two hours or so of the end of the meeting. The Secretary-General's statements and summaries of press conferences, including the noon briefing, would also be issued on the same day. Required resources for each additional language under this option would include:

Two editors at the P-4 level

One press officer at the P-3 level

One press officer at the P-2 level

Six press officers on general temporary assistance (GTA) fixed term (P-2)

Four support staff at G-5/6 (Other level)

12 additional press officers at the P-2 level for the General Assembly period

Four additional support staff at G-5/6 (OL) for the General Assembly period

5. The magnitude of resource requirements, should the Committee approve this option, amounts approximately to $7.2 million per annum for introducing press releases in four additional official languages.

Option II: Selective coverage

6. There are two possible alternatives for providing selective coverage:

(a) Coverage of **only the principal organs** — the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council — but excluding subsidiary bodies and the Main Committees of the General Assembly. The press releases would be comprehensive and made available on the same day. Resource estimates below are based on the average number of meetings held by each of those bodies in the previous years. In 2007, the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council met 295 times. The staffing resources needed for this option are:

One editor at the P-4 level

One press officer at the P-3 level

One press officer at the P-2 level

One proofreader/editorial assistant (OL)

Replacement GTA funds for editor, press officer and support staff when they are on leave or sick (working estimate of 2 months)

One temporary press officer (P-3) during the main General Assembly session (3.5 months)

One temporary press officer (P-2) during the main General Assembly session (3.5 months)

One temporary proofreader/editorial assistant during the main General Assembly session (3.5 months)

7. The magnitude of resource requirements, should the Committee approve this option, amounts approximately to $1.9 million per annum for introducing press releases in four additional official languages.

(b) Coverage of **selected meetings** of the Security Council, the General Assembly and its Main Committees, as well as press conferences, with the senior editor deciding on a day-to-day basis what meetings would be covered within the available staffing resources. This would provide same-day availability of press releases on particular meetings and activities, although the breadth of coverage would be limited. A working estimate of requirements per language for this option is:

One editor at the P-4 level

One press officer at the P-3 level

One proofreader/editorial assistant (OL)

Replacement GTA funds for editor, press officer and support staff when they are on leave or sick (working estimate of 2 months)

One temporary press officer (P-3) during the main General Assembly session (3.5 months)

One temporary press officer (P-2) during the main General Assembly session (3.5 months)

One temporary proofreader/editorial assistant during the main General Assembly session (3.5 months)

8. The magnitude of resource requirements, should the Committee approve this option, amounts approximately to $2.0 million per annum for introducing press releases in four additional official languages.

Option III: Adaptation

9. A small core staff attached to the Meetings Coverage Section would adapt — condense to essential elements — comprehensive press releases from English or French into the other official languages. Adaptation would begin only after completion of English or French versions, and therefore could not be available on the same day. To make up for lack of comprehensiveness, adaptations would contain links to the relevant documents in the other official languages. Estimated resources would be:

One editor at the P-4 level

One press officer at the P-3 level

One proofreader/editorial assistant (OL)

Replacement GTA funds for editor, press officer and support staff when they are on leave or sick

Two temporary press officers during the main General Assembly session (3.5 months)

One temporary proofreader/editorial assistant during the main General Assembly session (3.5 months)

10. The magnitude of resource requirements, should the Committee approve this option, amounts approximately to $2.0 million per annum for introducing press releases in four additional official languages.

Option IV: Translation — with delivery 24 hours later or more

11. This option would combine translation through the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), with limited Department of Public Information staff review to revise and edit the final text in each additional language.

12. The Department assumes that contractual translation through DGACM would be used, although at present there is no commitment to undertake such work and discussions would have to be held to that end if the General Assembly decides to pursue the option. The Central Translation Unit currently pays external contractors anywhere from $125 to $230 per 1,000 words, depending on the complexity and/or urgency of the text and the experience level of the translator. It might also be possible at a certain future point to negotiate a different fee structure for

guaranteeing a certain amount of work for freelance translators, although such an arrangement does not exist at present.

13. In 2007, the English coverage section produced 1,810 press releases with total pages of 9,753. Given the current fee structure and using estimates provided by DGACM, the cost for translating meetings coverage into one language would be anywhere from $731,475 to $1.345 million per annum. To translate the noon briefing each day would be another 2,087 pages, or from $156,525 to $288,006 per annum, and translating the 650 pages of other briefings would be from $48,750 to $89,700 per annum. Thus, the total cost to translate the current output of the Meetings Coverage Section into one language would be from $936,750 to $1.723 million per annum, and for four languages from $3.747 million to $6.894 million per year. Translations would strive to be available within 24 hours of a meeting, but this could not always be guaranteed.

14. The translated versions would then have to be printed and posted on the website and it is envisioned that that could be done with one staff member at General Service, Other level per language, at the cost of $333,696 for four languages. It should also be noted that the cost of translation could be reduced by limiting it to certain meetings — perhaps the principal organs, for example, as in the selected coverage alternative. The magnitude of resource requirements, should the Committee approve this option, ranges from $4.1 million to $7.2 million per annum for introducing press releases in four additional official languages.

Other issues

15. There would be additional costs for equipment, office space, telephone and other services for the staff that would be producing the language versions of press releases under any of the above options. Further, and especially in the case of options that require direct coverage in other languages, the current set-up in conference rooms was conceived to accommodate only a team of four press officers — two each working in English and French. The problem would be further compounded by the fact that the meetings coverage needs of the Department of Public Information in the Capital Master Plan are also based on four work stations/desks in the conference rooms. Therefore, any of the options that involve live or direct coverage in conference rooms would require either four to eight additional work stations (one or two per additional official language) in conference rooms, which would be extremely difficult to accommodate now and would also require a change in the Plan, or coverage being undertaken remotely using in-house audio-visual connection.

16. It should be noted, should the Committee decide to choose one of the options above, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, that a statement of programme budget implications reflecting a detailed breakdown of the requirements will be submitted to the Committee prior to its final decision.